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Dear Cooperator

SOUTH DAKOTA NOW HAS 16 SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS AND REFERENDUMS AUTHORIZED
FOR THREE MORE: FOUR MILLION ACRES NOW IN DISTRICTS; ONE-THIRD IS ADDITIONS

More than 1,100 Conservation Farm
Plans Completed Since July

Considerable activity with soil conservation districts has been taking place in South Dakota this spring. Sixteen districts are now organized and referendums have been authorized by the State Committee on three proposed districts in Fall River, Bon Homme, and Roberts Counties; one hearing has just recently been held on a proposed Jackson-Washabaugh District in those counties; May 12 is the date set for a hearing at Tulare on a proposed district in southwestern Spink County; a hearing on April 29 dealt with petitions on the fourth addition to the Brule-Buffalo District; Clay County and Silver Creek (Sanborn County) Districts have recently enlarged their boundaries; petitions requesting the third addition to the Clearfield-Keyapaha District (Tripp County) have just been completed. A hearing on a proposed district in Minnehaha County will soon be requested.

Reports from other districts indicate additions are being considered to the Sioux-Brule (Union County), Clay, Pennington, and American Creek (Lyman County) Districts.

Many of the pending actions will be completed prior to a meeting of the State Committee about May 15.

John V. Hepler, recently appointed Director of Extension, succeeds A. M. Eberle, Dean of Agriculture, as a member of the State Committee this month. Mr. Eberle has served as Chairman of the State Committee ever since the Districts Law became effective July 1, 1937. Much of the progress in conservation district work in this state can be credited to the work of Mr. Eberle while he was Director of Extension.

After approval of referendums in the Rosebud and Lincoln Districts, supervisors were appointed and elected in each district and are now organized. In the Rosebud District the referendum was 94 percent favorable with 96.7 percent of the land represented. In the Lincoln District the favorable majority was 78.8 percent with 74.6 percent of the land being represented in the vote. Rosebud officers and supervisors are: John Larson, Mission, Chairman; Thomas W. Lydon, Mission, Vice-Chairman, Carl Anderson, Mission, Treasurer; Wesley Henke, White River, County Agent, Secretary; George Klein, Valentine, Neb.; Jay Tate, Valentine, Nebraska. Lincoln

officers and supervisors are: Tilman Lappegard, Alcester, Chairman; Alex Johnson, Hudson, Vice-Chairman; Chris Anderson, Fairview, Treasurer; James Brooking, Hudson, Secretary; Frank Isenminger, Fairview; Herman Johnson, Hudson.

In the Brule-Buffalo District, Herman Viereck, Kimball, B. G. Ness, and Leo. C. Piskule, Pukwana were re-elected on April 5 to succeed themselves as supervisors for another three-year term.

An election in the Clearfield-Keyapaha District, of three supervisors will soon be held as three-year terms of Carl H. Keszler, Clearfield, Walter Hellman, Millboro, and Grover H. Meyer, Carter, expire this month.

The Extension Conservationist has been assisting county agents with educational work in many other areas of the state this past winter and spring and the likelihood exists that petitions requesting hearings on six to eight more proposed districts will be filed with the State Committee in the next few months.

Seven of the first eight districts have added territory to their boundaries. Of the 4,120,728 acres in the 16 districts now organized 1,371,670 acres or about one-third of the total represents additions to original boundaries. Instead of enlarging the eighth district (Emanuel-Choteau Creek) a new district (Scotland) has been proposed in the adjoining area. If this district is created it will mean Bon Homme County will be the first county in the state wholly within soil conservation districts.

Over 1100 conservation farm plans have been completed in districts since last July with the help of technicians of the Soil Conservation Service assisting districts. Application of conservation plans was started last fall on these plans and a good share of it is being completed this spring. These new agreements bring the total individual farm conservation plans in districts now to over 3000. Each year activities in soil conservation have been steadily increasing.

Trees Growing on Steep Slope Create Desire for Terracing Whole Quarter

A very good example or demonstration of growing trees and shrubs on a steep slope on a side hill is the tree planting on the Wm. Modena farm near Montrose in McCook County. The trees and shrubs were planted on the contour with terraces to aid in holding water. This is a part of the soil conservation work done on his Extension demonstration farm. He says that this is one of the best things he has ever done on his farm. The results were so good that Mr. Modena requested another quarter section of his farm be laid out on the contour for the 1941 season. Three other farmers in the county will also carry out demonstrations of conservation practices this year.

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The Dakota Farmer of April 5 carries an interesting article from the Mount Hope watershed area in the Sioux-Brule District. This story relates how nine farmers have combined to control erosion on a small Union County creek. It is a fine example of group planning and group action.

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Excerpts from an Editorial in a Recent Issue of the Mitchell Republic

It is important the agricultural regions not forget soil conservation during the excitement which is accompanying the war and the tremendous defense program being carried on by the United States..... It is vital that the soil of the nation not be abused... Any period of exceptional demand for farm products is sure to bring a danger of improper use of soil..... It is not a time to forget soil conservation.... The fertility of farm land is one of the most priceless possessions of the nation..... We who have surpluses of many food crops will be foolish if we do not look into the future and see that our ability to produce food in the years to come is properly safeguarded by sound policies now.

Grass Uses Moisture Most Efficiently;
Lose Feed by Evaporation and Run-off

Grass utilizes moisture more efficiently than any crop that can be grown in South Dakota. It requires 1,000 pounds of water to produce 1 pound of sweet clover; or 1,000 pounds of water transpire in producing 1 pound of sweet clover. It requires 500 pounds of water to produce 1 pound of wheat; but it requires only 300 to 400 pounds of moisture to produce 1 pound of grass.

We have pastures in South Dakota which will not produce 1 ton of dry grass to the acre although it requires only 3.6 inches of moisture or rainfall to produce that much. What happens to the remainder of moisture in a 17½-inch rain belt in South Dakota? Seventeen and a half inches of rain are sufficient to meet the requirements of grass in producing 5 tons of dry grass to the acre.

What do we do to save moisture? We often remove all vegetation allowing maximum run-off and evaporation. We are from 2 to 20 percent efficient, with an average efficiency of 12 percent, in utilization of moisture on pastures.

The sun and wind, and the Missouri River have been stealing too much moisture. Evaporation from soil surface varies on an average from 40 to 70 percent of total moisture received, and in one year during the last six, in southwestern South Dakota, the evaporation measured 105 percent of the total rainfall. This evaporation can be greatly reduced and moisture saved will increase grass yields materially.

One inch of run-off from one township means the loss of enough moisture to produce 6,400 tons of dry grass or to graze 2,285 cows for a 12-month period if the moisture could be utilized by grass plants. The sun and wind take moisture from a bare overgrazed pasture to a depth of as much as 3 feet or more. A heavy residue or cover will slow down all evaporation and prevent all the evaporation below 12 inches.

The principle of conserving moisture by keeping vegetative residue on

grassland is the same as that applied in conserving moisture by subsurface tillage which leaves a vegetative cover or mulch on the soil surface. This method results in increased yields.

(The above remarks are from a talk by Wilkie Collins, agronomist of the Soil Conservation Service, Lincoln, Nebraska. This talk was given at the Twelfth Annual Soil and Land Valuation Conference recently held in Brookings.)

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George Lehnert operated 40 acres of his Walworth County farm on the contour during the last cropping year. He reports that a heavy shower the latter part of August was all absorbed by the field and that no run-off occurred. In addition, this field caught the run-off from neighboring field which was farmed in the old manner, commonly called up-and-down-hill farming.

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New Bulletin on Range Conservation

A new bulletin, "Range Conservation Practices for the Great Plains," has been written by B. W. Allred, chief of the range conservation division of Region 7 of the Soil Conservation Service, Lincoln, Nebraska. It is Miscellaneous Publication 410 and is available from the county agent or the state Extension office.

Among practices for conservation of the range discussed by Allred are: stocking within the grazing capacity; using different ranges at the proper season to keep the grass vigorous; obtaining proper distribution of grazing by the use of salting systems, fencing, and watering places; supplemental feeding requirements and practices; the desirability of temporary pastures; mechanical improvements.

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"The history of every nation is eventually written in the way in which it cares for its soil."--Franklin D. Roosevelt.

WPA Labor Helps Soil Conservation
In Organized South Dakota Districts

National defense with its many related fields of national security and international assistance to democracy has placed increased emphasis on the utilization of our man power in truly productive enterprises. In order to attain a high level of production, it is very important that the best use be made of all resources, including soil and water, the two basic resources required in producing food for ourselves and peoples of other nations.

WPA through cooperation with soil conservation districts in making a direct and significant contribution to the preservation of soil and water resources to enable our country to meet the present and future emergencies better by assisting farmers to maintain soil resources in a productive condition.

The Emanuel-Choteau Creek district began utilizing WPA assistance on December 15, 1940. The district-sponsored project has provided labor for an average of 18 laborers per month who have been working under the supervision of Roy Branson, Project Supervisor. Detailed plans and specifications for work to be done are prepared by the Soil Conservation Service staff and such technical assistance is given as is required to carry out the conservation plans.

The district-sponsored WPA project has, to date, rip-rapped three earth-fill dams; placed 50 rock check dams; built two spring development structures; assisted in laying out contour guide lines; constructed diversion ditches on one farm; and nearly completed a large masonry over-flow dam on Emanuel Creek. Machinery has been used wherever possible and hand labor is used only on jobs which require hand labor. This keeps costs as low as possible.

Work for the spring and summer of 1941 includes planting and fencing trees on about 50 farms, surveying and staking contour guide lines on several hundred acres of cropland, building diversion ditches and outlets on 26 farms, building permanent gully struc-

NYA Workers Do Many Conservation Jobs;
Youths Move Well-Established Tree

The Brown-Marshall Soil Conservation district supervisors, feeling that NYA could help on conservation work, initiated an NYA project during the fore part of 1941. Eleven local youths were employed on this project and they have been doing some very fine work. Types of work which these young men did include:

- Woodland improvement
- Repair and maintenance of equipment
- Shelling sweet corn seed
- Compilation of land use and conservation survey maps
- Preparation of work shop
- Landscaping

Included in maintenance and repair of machinery are cleaning and painting Brown-Marshall Soil Conservation district machinery. Woodland improvement consists mainly of cutting down dead trees or sawing off dead branches and piling them to be burned or used as firewood, corner posts and fence posts. Compilation of land use and conservation survey maps consisted mostly in coloring the various soil types different designated colors for each cooperator in the district.

One unusual job completed by this group was the transplanting of a large blue spruce tree. This tree was approximately 18 feet high, 10 inches in diameter, and with a branch spread of 10 feet. A 3½-foot trench was dug around the tree about three feet from the trunk and sloped down from one side to allow sliding of a stoneboat under the roots and soil. The tree and soil were estimated to weigh three tons. The tree was pulled out with a tractor and hauled to the lawn where it was replanted.

tures on 18 farms, sloping and planting numerous gullies, surveying and constructing contour furrows and water spreaders, building earth stock water dams, establishing grass water ways building spring developments, and blading out drifted fences.

Strip Cropping is Good on Sandy Soil

On the C. D. Rodman farm in the Hitchcock community in Spink County, where the soil is very sandy, strip cropping has proven very satisfactory. Last year this farm was included in those selected for Extension demonstration farms and Mr. Rodman stated that 1940 was the first time in the three years during which he has lived upon his farm that all of his land had a cover growing on it and there was no blowing. Other practices carried out on this farm consisted of one and one-half miles of shelterbelts.

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Cal Tanner of Miranda in Faulk County contoured some of his crop land for the first time last year. He is very enthusiastic over the practice and maintained that it would have been impossible for him to recover his seed had it not been for his basin listing and contour farming.

Fallows on Contour; Improvement Shown

A water facility demonstration project was established in 1940 on the John Urban farm in Haakon County. He used a damming attachment and carried out all of his fallow operations on the contour. Part of his crops were planted on the contour and all fields were planted with the deep furrow drill.

Yields were from five to eight bushels above those on adjoining fields on other farms. That area was very dry last year and many fields were not harvested in the community, but Mr. Urban harvested all his fields and obtained fair yields.

A large acreage of his pasture was furrowed on the contour to halt erosion and stop water losses. While he was plowing these furrows, rain fell, and a check on moisture penetration showed that the water soaked in from 18 to 20 inches on the contoured area and only 6 to 8 inches in that part of the pasture not contour furrowed.

Faith Holds Second Conservation Day

The second annual Conservation Day was held at Faith in the Tri-County District the last Monday in March. An unusually large crowd packed the theater to hear the discussions and see the conservation pictures shown. The program was in charge of J. M. Heimer, chairman of the board of supervisors, who reports that another similar day has already been planned for next year. A model water spreader system and a replica of a dam used for irrigating a garden were on display in the district office.

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Contours Get Results on Douglas Farms

The farms of W.M. Baah Hofman, Dick Vis, and Fred Litenberg in Douglas County were laid out for contour farming in 1940. Two of these cooperators are especially well pleased with the results. The third cooperator was dissatisfied with the amount of turning required, although considerable moisture was saved by this method. All three of the cooperators were enthusiastic about the results obtained by contour furrows in pastures. In spite of the very limited rainfall, they were able to see an improvement in their contoured pastures as compared with pastures that were not contoured. The increased plant growth was especially noticeable adjacent to the furrows.

"The soil conservation districts movement is sweeping the country in a manner unprecedented in our agricultural history. There have been important movements among farm people in education, social betterment, cooperative marketing, health protection, livestock and crop improvement, and other fields. But there has been no movement comparable in speed, scope, or significance to the spread of soil conservation districts formed by landowners themselves for the defense of their own lands through their own leadership and direction."--H. H. Bennett.

Burning Trash May Have Advantages, But
Scales Favor Leaving it on Soil

Can farmers afford to burn their stubble in preparation for seeding grain or row crops? There are several viewpoints that must be considered in answering this question. With heavy grain stubble and dense weed growth it is difficult to get most tillage implements to work without clogging and piling up. There is always a strong temptation, under these circumstances, to burn off the stubble so that tillage operations may be speeded. This will permit a better job of seedbed preparation and in some years satisfactory yields may result.

This is only half of the story! Maintenance of a stubble cover on the surface gives many definite advantages. Dan E. Cass, Project Manager at Winner, lists the following benefits which may be derived by leaving the cover on the soil:

The residue will act as a sponge and cause more moisture to penetrate into the soil.

The mulch cover will prevent moisture from evaporating.

The trashy cover will help prevent crusting over of the soil surface after a "beating" rain at the time when young plants are sprouting.

Fields with a good cover will have much less soil blowing than fields that are bared from burning stubble.

There will be much less loss of moisture and soil from run-off when "flash" rains fall during the summer.

Crop residue will remain on the fields to add to the organic matter which is so necessary in forming soil binders.

Observations made last spring at Winner showed that:

After the "flash" 1-inch rain on April 28, considerable soil washing took place on fields that were burned off, whereas practically no run-off occurred on fields with a good crop residue cover.

Observations of the 30-mile an hour wind occurring May 13 and 14 revealed soil blowing on fields that had been

burned off, while no soil removal was apparent on fields protected with a good stubble cover.

Considering the advantages of crop residue cover compared to burning the fields, the scale tips very heavily toward the former, not only for consideration of present crops but in consideration of longtime results and the conservation of the soil for the future. Rather than burning off the crop residue on the surface, subsurface tillage in the fall will do much to eliminate the growth of weeds and will consequently make spring operations much easier. Thousands of acres have been prepared by these subsurface tillage methods in the soil conservation district and good results are being experienced in spring tillage.

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"Land is not a commodity. Land is not the product of man, nor with all the ingenuity of classical economists can he ever mix his labor with anything that is not land and thereby fashion land. Land is the gift of Nature entrusted to man's keeping upon which he may project his energies of mind and muscle and thereby support life and fashion a civilization."--Wilhelm Anderson in Land Policy Review.

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Results at the Experiment Station, Brookings, indicate that in 32 years of farming, 35 percent of the organic matter has been depleted from the soil. In considering permanent agriculture, we must recognize the fact that continuous farming decreases the pore space, decreases organic matter, increases the compactness and weight of soil and greatly decreases the water holding capacity. Under these conditions the same soil that used to yield a given crop on 18 inches of moisture will not make the same yields after 40 years of hard farming. What will be the condition of soils in South Dakota after they have been farmed continuously for 200 years?

Let's Compare "Severely Eroded"
And "Less Eroded" Farms in Ohio

A study has been made of 100 farms located in four Soil Conservation Service demonstration projects in Ohio. J. I. Falconer, chairman of the rural economics department at Ohio State University, reveals the following observations favoring the less eroded farms over the severely eroded farms:

The less eroded farms had more livestock and fewer cash crops than did the more severely eroded farms.

They had a larger percentage of their land in erosion-resistant crops, such as meadow, pasture, and woods.

They had a larger percentage of their cultivated crops on the more gentle slopes and a smaller percentage on steeper slopes.

Rotations containing a larger percentage of erosion-resistant crops and a smaller percentage of clean-cultivated crops were used on the less severely eroded farms.

A smaller percentage of the less eroded farms was mortgaged and the mortgaged indebtedness per acre was smaller on the farms with the least erosion.

Also, erosion reduces crop yields. Crops of corn on the less eroded farms were only 25 percent above those of the more severely eroded farms.

Furthermore, incomes were 65 percent larger on the less eroded farms; it was also observed that erosion affects buildings and living conditions. The majority of buildings on the less eroded farms were maintained in good condition, whereas most of the buildings on the more severely eroded farms were in poor or only fair condition.

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Ten farmers in Jones County practiced contour farming in 559 acres during 1940. They report that both wind and water erosion were materially reduced. Increased yields as a result of conserving more water were noticed on all crops. Cooperators reported that less fuel was used when farming operations were performed on the contour.

Mr. John Sarvis' work at the Mandan Experiment Station in North Dakota over a period of years indicates that 5 acres of native grass grazed under deferred rotation system has a greater carrying capacity than 7 acres continuously grazed.

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There is an excellent example in Beadle County where, for a long period, Western wheatgrass the blue grama have been properly grazed on a section of land east of Huron. Actual figures and returns give conclusive evidence as to the economic value of conservative grazing.

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Contouring Lengthens Corn Rows

August Dolney has a quarter section that he farms on the contour in Day County. The slope of the fields are so uniform that only three guide lines are required on the entire 160 acres and there are only three odd-shaped, small fields. He has planted these to alfalfa. The corn rows are longer than they used to be when the farm was operated on the up-and-down hill basis. Mr. Dolney said that there was a big saving in fuel since the contouring eliminated gear shifting.

A six-acre slough that had never before been utilized was plowed last fall for the first time. Later there was a 4.59-inch rainfall but the slough received none of the water since it was held back on the fields by the contour and a spreader terrace constructed for that purpose.

County Agent, Al. O'Connell stated the reclamation of this slough and the increased yields on contoured fields are receiving much favorable comment but that the length and gradual curves of the contoured fields and the small acreage in odd-shaped fields are the most valuable features of this pioneer demonstration. Observers tell him that "Cropping on the contour isn't so much 'monkey-work' after all."

This Tells How Conservation Districts
Are Organized and What They Get Done

How long does it take to organize a soil conservation district? How fast do they get into operation after they get organized? What do they accomplish after they get started?

These and other questions are often asked. The best answer may be obtained by taking a soil conservation district and checking all the data available to determine just how a district does function.

Drawing out of a hat, we picked the Carpenter district which consists of nine townships in Beadle, Clark, and Spink Counties. The county agents held many educational meetings, tours and demonstrations in this territory during the summer of 1940.

Petitions were circulated during June and July. The hearing was held on August 14. Educational activities continued and the referendum was conducted on October 28. The State Committee approved the district and appointed two supervisors. Three supervisors were elected on January 10, 1941. On January 17 the supervisors elected their officers, drew up a brief program of work, and signed a basic memorandum of understanding with the USDA in order that they might receive assistance from federal agencies.

Six months had elapsed from the time the people requested a district begin activities. During all this time the educational program had continued and the people in the area were kept informed on local conservation practices and problems.

Here is a list of the actions the supervisors have taken in the first two and a half months since they organized:

Held six district supervisors' meetings to outline policies.

Prepared a detailed work plan for district activities.

Signed supplementary memorandums with the Soil Conservation Service and the Forest Service.

Outlined plans for furnishing technical assistance, machinery, seeds,

and trees, and labor to cooperating farmers.

Conducted six educational meetings in conjunction with the county agents, with an attendance of three hundred farmers.

Received and reviewed approximately fifty applications for assistance from interested landowners and tenants.

And now--most important of all--here is what has been accomplished in the soil conservation district in the first two and a half months since the supervisors were elected:

Twenty-nine farm plans have been completed.

Fourteen additional farm plans are awaiting landowners' signatures.

These plans cover 10,402 acres of farm land, on which these practices will be put into action this spring:

35 acres of trees will be planted

452 acres of grass will be seeded

15 dugouts and dams will be constructed

3,629 acres will be farmed in strips

Fence cleaning and rebuilding on 5 farms

Irrigation systems will be constructed on 3 farms

More applications are being reviewed and approved at each supervisors' meeting, and undoubtedly by the time you read this twice as many farms will be planned and twice as many conservation practices will be "on the land" in the district.

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Charles Stacey in Clark County planted some of his corn on the contour last year for the first time. His farm had been selected as a demonstration farm by Colman Wagner, county agent. The first results were noticed last summer when his corn did not burn up during the hot weather as did the corn on adjoining farms. Mr. Stacey reports that he harvested a fair crop in spite of the dry weather and feels that it was mainly due to the moisture saved by contour farming.

Evaluation Surveys Portray Values of Various Conservation Practices

Evaluation surveys are conducted by the technicians of the Soil Conservation Service at various locations to determine the value and feasibility of the different conservation practices. Most of the work in the state is at Huron and Winner, with limited studies at Chamberlain, Hecla, Alcester, and Fort Meade.

The South Dakota Experiment Station cooperates by furnishing grain sample threshing facilities, studies on diseases of grass, and on grasshopper damage. The yields and soil samples are collected from cooperators' fields and thus are based upon actual farm conditions in the area.

Studies conducted in an area are designed to gather information on problems farmers face in carrying out a proper land use and soil conservation program. As an example, at Winner last year the grasshopper observations were located according to surveys made in the fall of 1939 which indicated where different intensities and uniformity of infestations might be found and compared.

The subsurface tillage work, which will, no doubt, play a very important part in modifying future tillage practices, was carried out on 2000 acres on 35 different cooperators' farms. This year yields and soil moisture comparisons will be made on these 35 farms. Other studies will be continued at Winner and Huron this year relative to strip cropping, terracing, contour farming and pasture furrows, grass seeding, and crop adaptation and rotation in relation to 'hopper damage. Water erosion will be a problem if rainfall is high and will necessitate studies on gully control, grassing drainageways, and water spreading.

Studies will be made to determine how and where subsurface tillage can be used to best advantage and to compare it with other methods of tillage used in the area. During 1940, crop yields were determined on lands having varying depths of topsoil. Results show that

The thinner topsoils result in considerably decreased yields. This work will be continued during 1941 at Huron and Winner and probably will be initiated at several other points in the state.

The Hecla area, Chamberlain area, and Winner project carry on cooperative work with the Experiment Station on the effect of various tillage methods upon grasshopper egg destruction. The Chamberlain area also will study contour vs. up-and-down hill farming with various types of tillage. The Alcester area and camp are testing fertilizers and comparing terraces and contour farming with the up-and-down hill farming method. Native grasses are clipped at Fort Meade and Chamberlain each year to determine the yield of forage for each specie. This will be extended to the central and eastern part of the state this year.

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Many Groups Plan Conservation Tours

Many groups have already indicated that they intend to tour the different conservation areas during the summer. A tour is always welcomed by any of the Soil Conservation work units and visiting groups will be shown any conservation practices they wish to see. June is always a good month for tours for most of the conservation measures are in full bloom at that time. Anyone interested in organizing a group for a tour should get in touch with his county agent, who will be able to assist in making all of the arrangements. There is no better way of getting acquainted with the conservation activities in South Dakota than by visiting one of the areas where this type of work is concentrated and talking over the practices with the farmers themselves.

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Every acre of farm land in the State of Alabama is now included within the boundaries of soil conservation districts. This is the first state to have all of its land in legally authorized cooperatives for conservation.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE

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Ross D. Davies, State Coordinator
Brookings, South Dakota

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